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E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/29/2011
TAGS: PREL PGOV PTER IS IR SY KJUS IN
SUBJECT: SENATOR SPECTER'S MEETING WITH LIKUD LEADER
NETANYAHU

Classified By: Ambassador Richard H. Jones. Reason 1.4 (B/D)

¶1. (C) Summary: Senator Arlen Specter (PA) and the
Ambassador met with former prime minister (PM) and current
Likud Party leader Binyamin Netanyahu on December 27 to
discuss Syria and the Iranian nuclear threat. Senator
Specter reported on Syrian President Asad's interest in
negotiations with Israel. Netanyahu urged the U.S. to
mobilize all its diplomatic and national efforts against
Iranian acquisition of nuclear weapons.   End Summary.

SYRIA

¶2. (C) Senator Specter shared his impression that President
Asad is more assertive, does not like to be isolated, and
indicated he could exert influence over the Hamas and
Hizballah terrorist organizations. He also reported that
Asad had denied arming Hizballah or assassinating Hariri, but
Specter clarified that he did not necessarily believe these
Syrian claims. Netanyahu responded by arguing that Syria was
waging active low-intensity war on Israel through its support
of Hizballah and Hamas and its alliance with the Iranian
regime. Although he professed that he was not against
talking with the Syrians, Netanyahu said he would only do so
from a starting point of "non-war."

Golan Heights

¶3. (C) Netanyahu commented that the recent Lebanon War had
bolstered Asad's confidence; he asked what Asad wanted in
return, to which Specter answered: "the Golan." Recalling
his own negotiations with Hafez Al-Asad in the late 1990's,
Netanyahu claimed that he had obtained Asad's assent to
Israeli possession of Mt. Hermon without making any
concessions regarding the Golan: "When Asad asked how many
meters Israel would want on the Eastern shore of the Sea of
Galilee, I replied 'miles.'" Netanyahu explained that while
it was important to ascertain what Asad was willing to give
(i.e., cessation of Hamas and Hizballah terrorism), what
Israel gives to Syria must also be carefully considered. He
stressed the strategic importance of Israel remaining on the
Golan so as to enforce a peace agreement with Syria.

IRAN

¶4. (C) Senator Specter reported that he had raised Iran
with Asad, notably Ahmadinejad's assertion that there was no
Holocaust and his "mad call to wipe out Israel." Although

both Specter and Netanyahu agreed on the importance of UNSCR 1737, Netanyahu flagged with concern Iran's stated unwillingness to cooperate with the UN. Netanyahu characterized Ahmadinejad as representative of the "lunatic fringe" with aspirations to become a world power. Specter noted India's interest in not having another nuclear power in the region. Netanyahu praised President Bush's statements regarding how "unacceptable" it would be for Iran to acquire nuclear weapons, and urged the U.S. to use "every means necessary" to prevent this scenario. Clarifying his position, Netanyahu said that only diplomacy backed up by other means (short of war) has a chance of working with Iran.

TARGETED KILLING

¶5. (C) Netanyahu asked Senator Specter if the U.S. government had the right to "dispose of its enemies." Specter replied that if the U.S. captures its enemies, the government is obligated to try them: "You can't torture or kill them." Netanyahu replied that he would not like such constitutional restraints, to which Specter commented: "You can't pick and choose (from the Constitution)."

¶6. (U) CODEL Specter did not have an opportunity to review this message before departure.

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